

Rich Evans



A V A L O N

Vol. 2 No. 3



Avalon

Missouri Southern's
Monthly Arts Magazine

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All materials (short stories, poetry, essays,
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Editor's Column

It would be more appropriate to use
an editorial "we" in a column such
as this, but "we" would not want anyone
else associated with "us" and this magazine
to be accountable for anything I am about to
say.

I was going to outline Avalon's purpose--its
mission--and tell how I've tried to accomplish
it. But I have already described its mission,
and who cares what I have tried to do? In-
stead, I'll tell what I haven't done, what I'd
wished I'd done, and why.

I haven't made this column a regular item in
Avalon but have used it to introduce the year,
and now to end it. Aside from these uses, I
feel this column has little place. I am not an
art critic, literary or otherwise, nor could I spin
this into a mysterious yarn that would have
people sitting on the edge of their seats. That
is not my niche. My poem is Avalon. From the
shape of its letters to the placement of each
piece of art within it, my interest is the same
as most poets--to get one to read the whole
piece, in its entirety, and understand what it
is trying to say.

I haven't been able, as I first thought I would,
to enhance the reproduction quality of the art-
work by using photo-mechanical transfers.
However, the use of P.M.T.'s did allow the prin-
ting of artwork that would have ordinarily
been too large. The problem I now believe is
inherent in the publication itself. One just
can't get magazine reproduction quality in

black and white on newspaper paper. Higher
quality paper would demand a higher budget.
A higher budget would demand advertising,
and advertising is not within the purpose or
scope of this magazine--nor do I hope it ever
will be. It shall, I hope, remain a magazine for
the people of Missouri Southern, by the peo-
ple of Missouri Southern. And besides, the
College already has such a quality publication,
The Winged Lion, published by the English
Department.

I wish I had put up more signs, used more of
that free bulletin board space (although I
seldom see people reading them), and spoken
to more people about submitting work to
Avalon, for then maybe there would have been
more issues to enjoy. But as a consequence of
not doing these things, I have learned a
curious thing; those artists who know the true
value of art and who were not limited by
Avalon's news-magazine tabloid format found
Avalon anyway.

Special thanks this issue go to Connie
Fogelson and the department of communica-
tions for the use of the copying machine, Mark
Mulik and Rob Smith for some last-minute
late-night typing, and numerous others who
helped restrain my impassioned outbursts
when trying to obtain a free terminal Wednesday
night.

Thanks to all who have read, all who have
contributed, and all who have made this
magazine possible.

Sherlock Holmes; 100th Anniversary

by Rick Evans

In 1887 a struggling young English doctor
named Arthur Conan Doyle began writing
novels to pass the long periods of time be-
tween cases. One of his early efforts was a
mystery titled "A Study in Scarlet." The novel
featured a detective named Sherlock Holmes,
and a doctor named Watson.

After several rejection slips, Doyle sold the
story and it was published in a magazine later
that year. The story attracted some attention
but, was not overly successful. However, the
editor of the American magazine Lippincott's
liked it well enough that he asked Doyle to
write another adventure with Holmes and
Watson. Doyle agreed and proceeded to write
"The Sign of the Four." Again the story was
published but was not an outstanding success.

It wasn't until Doyle approached the editor
of *The Strand* in London with the idea of do-
ing a series of short stories about Holmes that
the character caught on with the public. The
first of the short stories to be published was
"A Scandal in Bohemia." The story gained
Holmes and his creator the success that had

previously eluded them.

Over the years Holmes has proven to be one
of fiction's most enduring characters. He even
survived an attempt by Doyle to do him in.
At one point Doyle grew tired of the character
and sent him apparently to his death battling
his arch foe Professor Moriarty in the story
"The Final Problem." Some years later Doyle
resurrected the detective in "The Empty
House" and continued the stories. The series
ended in 1927 with "The Adventure of
Shoscombe Old Place."

Now, on the 100th anniversary of the
publication of "A Study in Scarlet," Holmes
and Watson remain as popular as ever with
the reading public and show no signs of slow-
ing down. Many contemporary authors have
continued the adventures of Holmes after the
death of Conan Doyle, matching him with
other fictional characters such as Dracula and
Dr. Jeckle and with such real-life personalities
as Sigmund Freud and Harry Houdini. Even
in today's world of high technology the gas-
lit adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Dr.
Watson continue to thrill readers of all ages.

Contributors

Art

Rick Evans
Mike Prater
Curtis Steere

Photography

Barb Fullerton
JoAnn Hollis
Sean Vanslyke

Short Stories

Mark Corrington
Mike Prater

Poetry

Barb Fullerton
Marcus Martin
Mike Prater
Randy Scott
Cara Walker
Dan Weaver
Jeania Young

And Knuckles Cracked Like Chestnuts

(A Song at Auschwitz)

And knuckles cracked like chestnuts
in thumb-screwed flames,
as eyes popped out
through pudding waves--
her lungs now gassed and sterilized
by an oven's gluttonous scream.

Well-stoked the chimney's xanthic fumes,
well-sung the hornet's dream,
well was I clipped and mesmerized
on barbed wire fence to sting.

Moon timed its tongue
of waves on shore
by the turning of its eye;
and we are continents
struck on ecliptic bones
by a tired tail of a storm.

Poetry by Randy Scott

When Tender Spent The Night To Speak

When tender spent the night to speak,
I dreamt with her
while moon straddled stars,
and light lifted its face
to close my eyes 'til dawn.

Still the bird now flows
in cradled lust of flight;
I talk to the hardwork of surf,
and linger
in the stillness of the night.

What Windows Cannot Speak

What windows cannot speak
glance shadows
to grate my green eyes blue;
what weaves the odor of the sea
distills the nostrils of the wind,
and writhes the clockwork 'round.

Which tide to color dreams
now paints each post past night;
my land that sifts in fog and wave
noe peers, but cannot see;
I ponder silence
to drift with the turning
of the sand.

Artwork and Poetry by Curtis Steere

Review 36

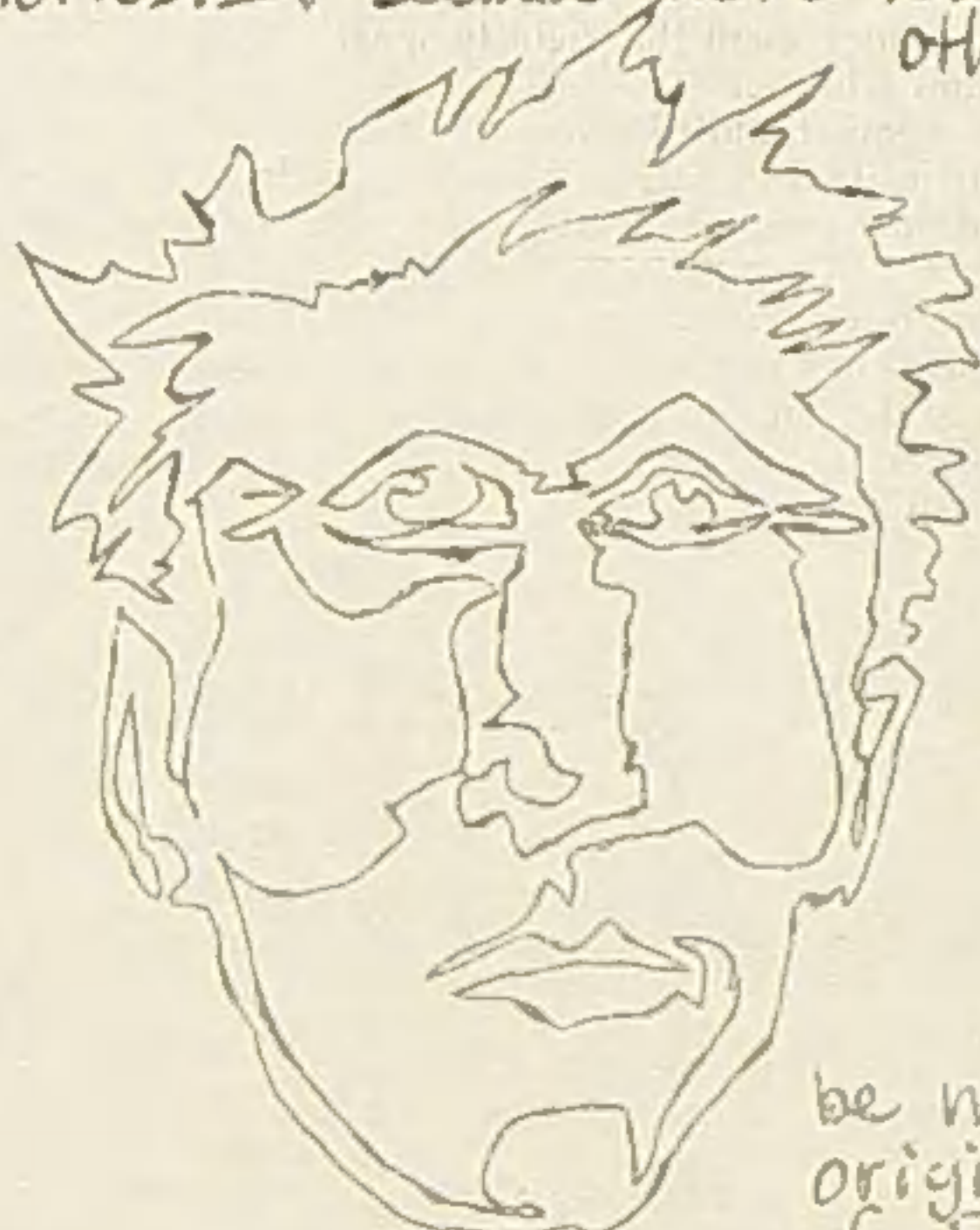
Born Burning

By William Faulkner

Tone; Despairing/Bitter

P. 473

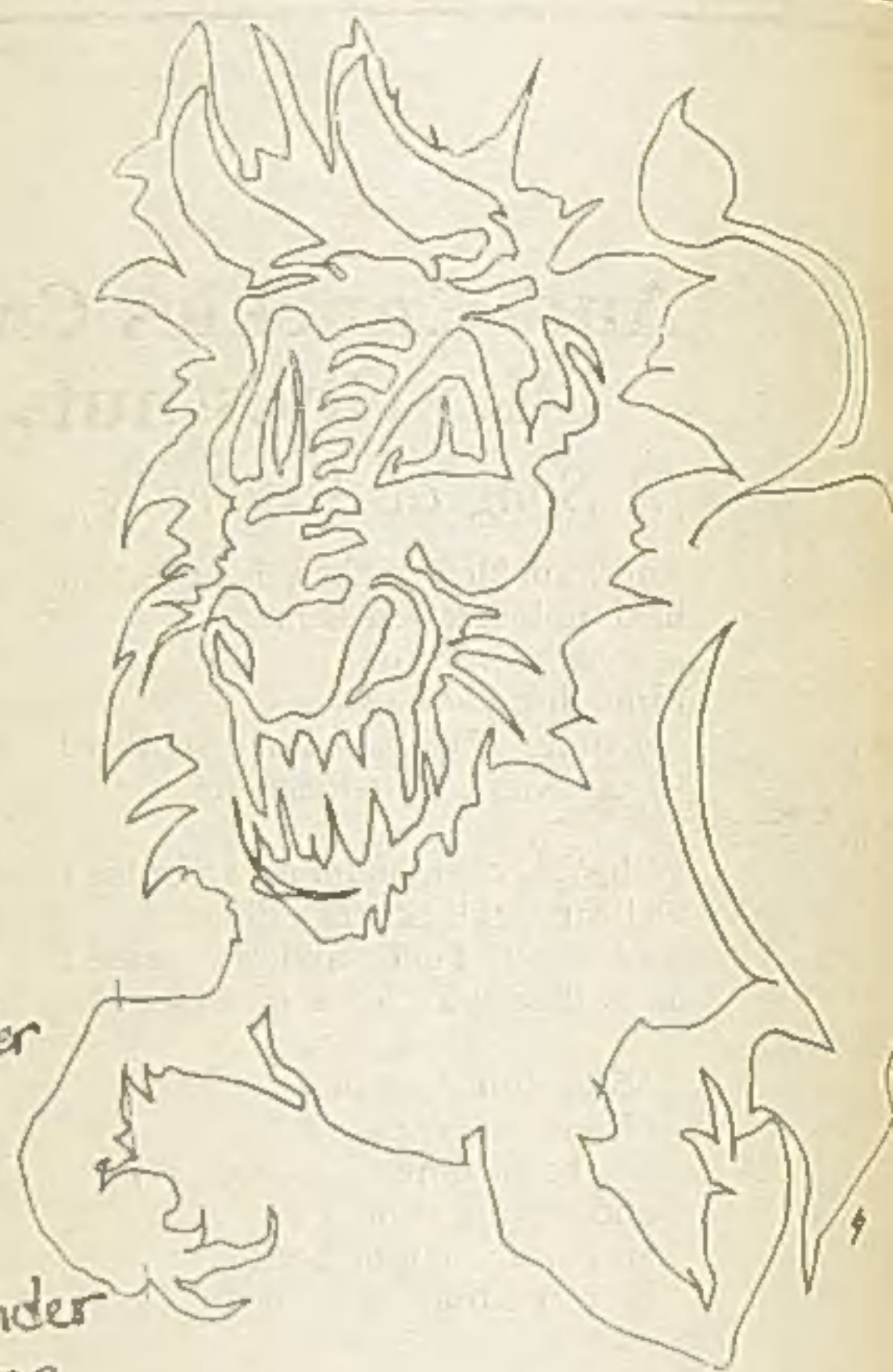
This was my favorite of William Faulkner's stories. It seemed more realistic than his other tales. (I wonder what ever became of Colonel Sartoris's namesake; the boy). It was interesting the way Faulkner sets the stage of conflict ~~be~~ within the boy himself. He was in a difficult position.



Flam Snopes

* Of adaptations; one might say that you could more easily write about any action or emotion you might see in a film, but to portray the same action or emotion experienced in a film might be a more difficult job to do.

I suppose a comparison should be made between this original literary version of Faulkner's story and the film adaptation were able to view. The film will ~~have~~ has the magic of animation; of life; of motion but does not pay attention to all the details that the book does. I favored the book for this reason.



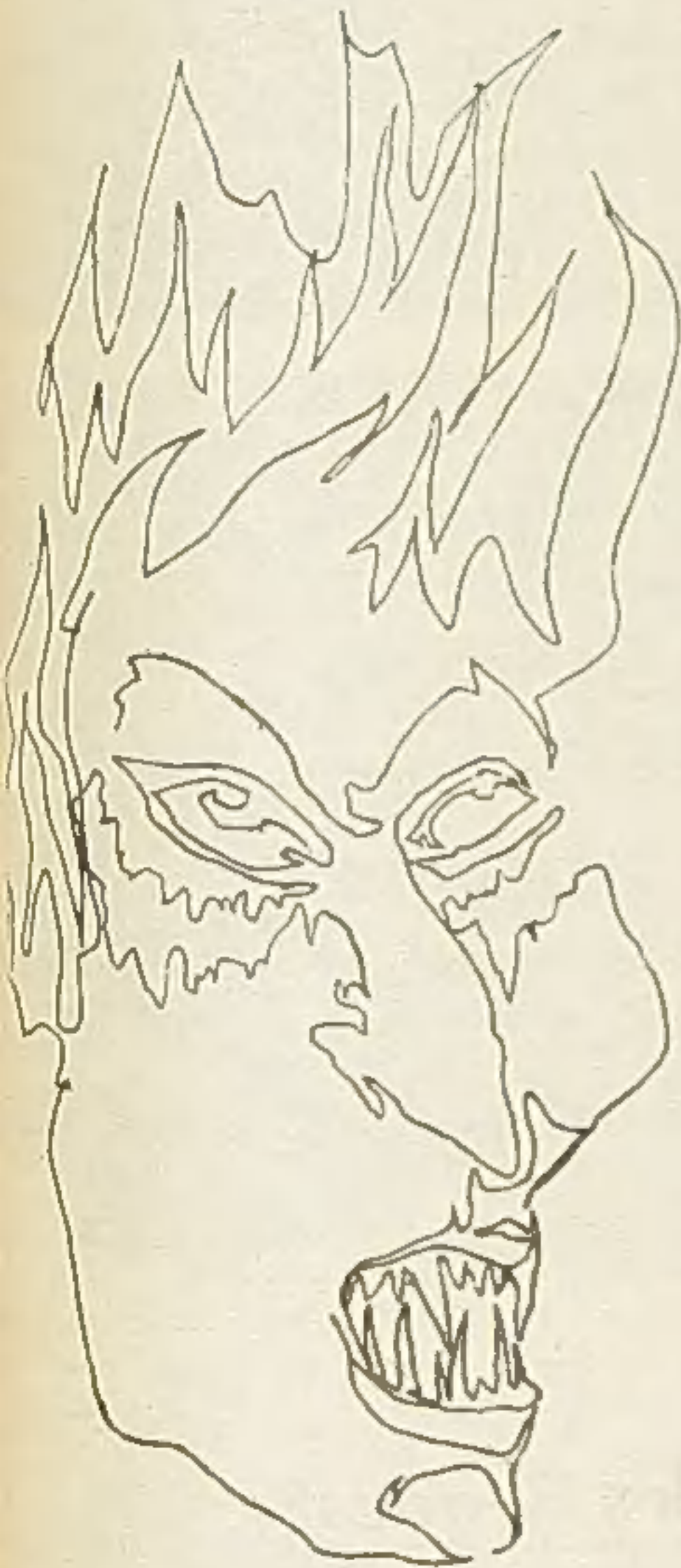
Try or die

Sudden realization
tragic situation
need an alteration
for my mind

My bad habits
breed like rabbits
trying to grab what's
left behind

Body tiring
escape beguiling
time expiring
going blind

Extreme ambition
result transition
a new position
I must find.
Try or die



Medio

Liberal Moderation
 somewhere in between
 not quite broad or narrow
 within the two extremes
 no need to hurry
 no need to wait
 never too early
 almost too late
 not too fast
 never too slow
 never regressing
 forever to grow.

Experimental Management

(Leadership Qualities)

Ideological order
 a practice in theory
 all in the palm of the hand
 regimentation weary

Kaotic orchestration,
 expidites confusion
 Rarely systematic
 Rapid diffusion

Consistently inconsistent
 subject to change
 non-existent regulation
 Patterned disarray

Disorderly conduction
 perpetual befuddling
 Methodical destruction
 Authoritative muddling



Rain

i saw an ark on
tv this morning
Newark wanted the thing
torn down
and the occupants
evicted

a public eyesore
make room for the new
tenements!
but
the courts gave the thing
a chance
and it's raining today
things like that happen
in New Jersey

Dan Weaver

Gas

they turned the gas
off
and it's cold
nights
but i dream of
bare flesh
and the heat
returns
it's not as
bad
as some people
think
my life i
mean
of course it's
not at all like
theirs
i couldn't live
it if it
were
theirs is dreamless
consistent
no heat
plenty of
gas

Dan Weaver

My Art

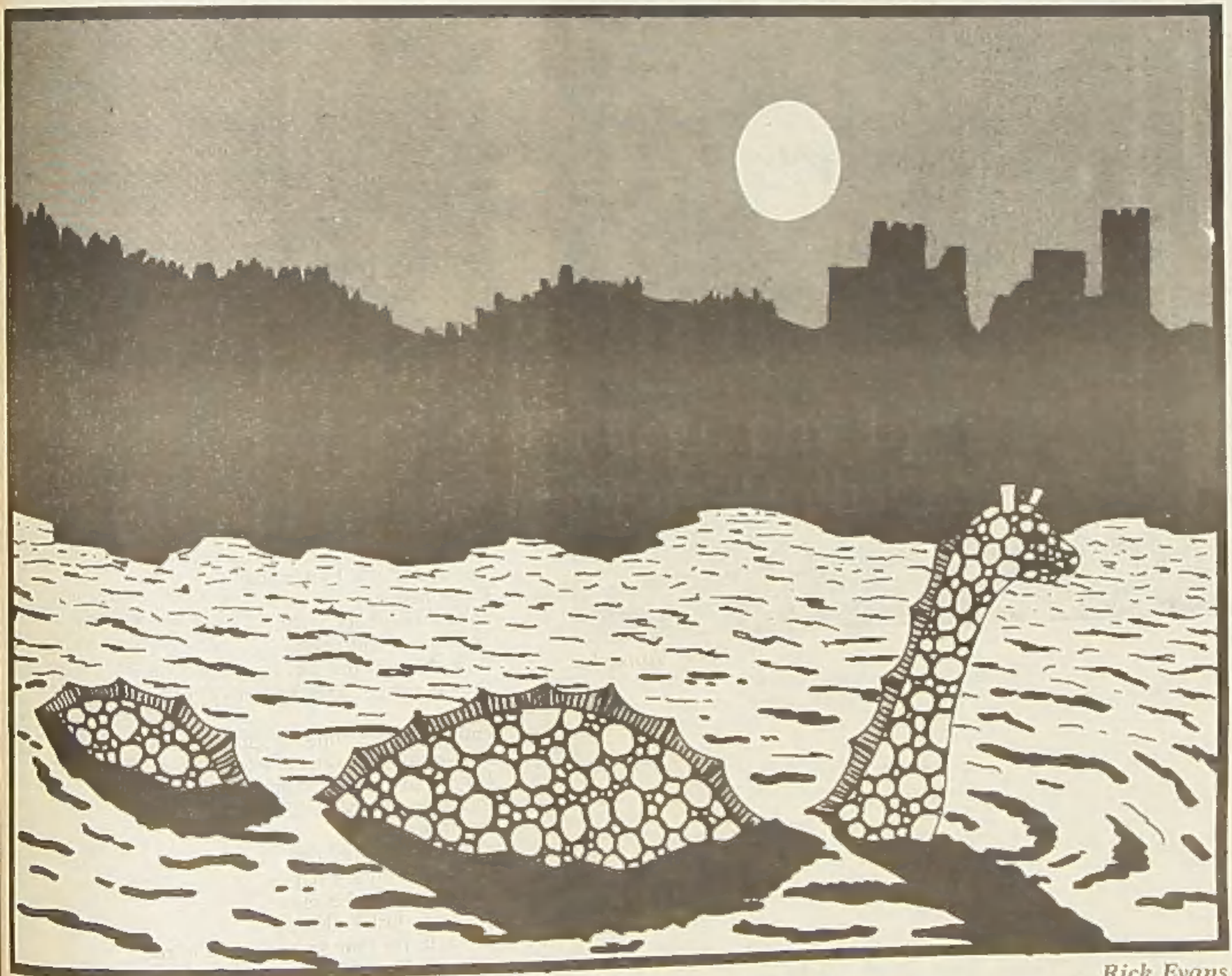
my rhymes like my reasons
are different than most
but i don't care about
that
so long as you're listening
you'll hear
and like it or not
(you're bound one way or the
other)
i'll just keep on trying
until your indifference
kills it
kills what i most revere
the attempt
to reach you

Dan Weaver

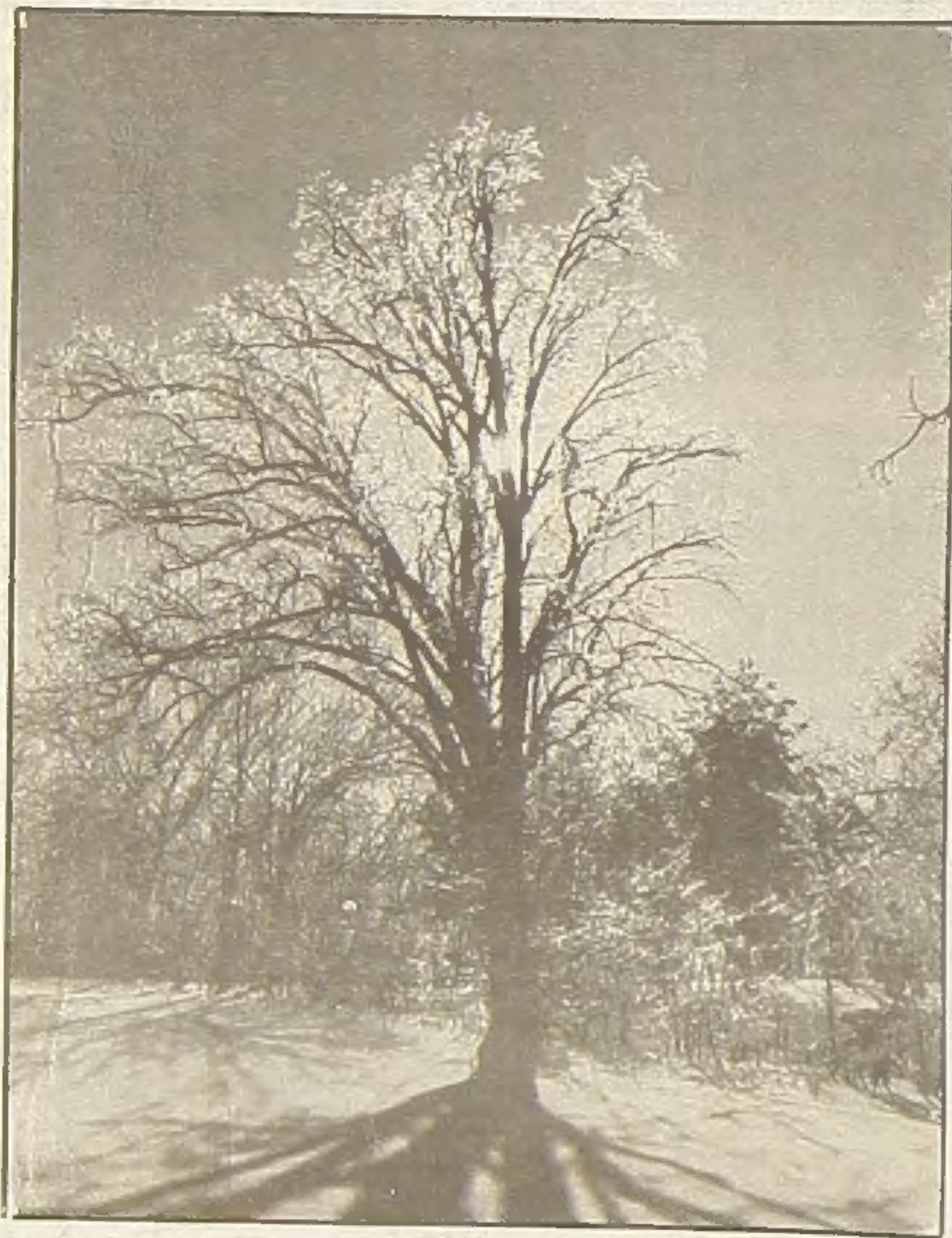
Derrek's Request

Oh, minstrel play beneath the moon
Sing a song of love this time
Play for me each lonely note
Let me hear each painful line.
As the moon glow guides your hand
Just let me drink my wine
This is a night for heartache
Just another of its kind.
And, alas, I'm left with empty cup
And now you'll want your gold
The song was one you've played before
It was a tune of old.
For you played it when I met her
When the moon was just as bright
Funny how you can see no pain
When affection blurs your sight.
So, here's your coin, and another too
You earned your pay with song
Perhaps you have reminded me
That again my heart was wrong.

Mike Prater



Rick Evans



Sean Vanslyke

I live in a dream world

I live in a dream world
 everything spins around me
 all the colors are bright
 and beautiful
 seemingly made for me
 When small things happen
 and my world isn't so bright
 I pout and want attention
 till someone
 colors it all back right.
 Youth is bright colors
 they shine in the night
 they never get tired or lonely
 or sad
 and my colors shine bright.
 I have my own dream world
 I try to always be happy and glad
 to others it may be dingy
 but to me
 my fortune is my dad.
 I consider myself happy
 and content to be me
 so please just be happy
 yourself, for that so important to me.
 I love to live
 I love to be free
 but most of all
 I love the people that surround me.

Cara Walker

Into the Zone of Twilight

I walked into my front room
Where the piano resides
I said, "Hello there, Mr. Baldwin
And how are you today?"
"I ain't been played in months,
And I'm sadly out of tune!"
"I hadda ask," said I.

I walked into my study
Where written knowledge lies
I said, "Converse with me,
You myriad of books!"
But all I got in answer
Was many dirty looks.

I stood above my typewriter
Upon my dusty desk
And said, "Hello, noisy companion
With the funny-sounding bells."
"Where have you been lately," it said,
"I thought you'd found someone else."

I staggered out to my sports car
Ah, the relief of a drive!
To soothe my worldly cares
The utter sanctity!
While speeding along
I said, half-caring
"Automobile, out with it!
What do you have to say?!"

No reply...

I exclaimed,
"I've taken verbal abuse
From every other
Inanimate object I own,
And I'm ready to take my licks!"

"Okay, but you may not like it,"
It said to my dismay,
"My brakes are nonexistent,
And my wheels just fell away..."

Poetry by Marcus Martin

Bitterness

Deal me not your filthy cards
I don't wish to play your game
I made a pact with you
I know
But where it leads
I will not go

At first I thought I was lucky
Then I thought I was sane
Next I thought I was smart
That's when you know
You're deranged

I really believed
You were the answer

I learned
The true depths
of my stupidity

Next step?

I've been down this road a million times

REBUILD.
GROW.

IT GETS BETTER.



Dressmaker



Secrets



Breaktime

Severed

Looking like blue roots
but when penetrated or disconnected
red drips

Roots connect to a strong trunk
but once the red leaks
the tree begins to die,
lose faith

Hurry,

hurry

tie the severed lifeline
Light filters through the numbness
Life begins once more
But if life is in a white jacket-
KILL the trunk

Barb Fullerton

Esta Lee

Trembling body
 dimmed eyes peering over wire glasses
 swelling hands
 that touch
 touching gently the pages of the Bible
 words of humble coming from her
 dull colored lips
 Older ears not hearing the vowels but straining
 to listen not to words, but understanding
 She is slow, trembling,
 but careful giving her gentle touch to others
 Humble words spoken meekly
 but Strongly
 Troubled years turned to wisdom
 She grows from hurt and love
 sharing what she received from above
 to creatures of God
 Lonely is not her category
 life has been fulfilling
 counting her blessings
 waiting for the day
 that the Lord will take her away

Barb Fullerton



Piper

Photography and Poetry by Barb Fullerton

Case NO 24618

Automatic terminated
 shutdown on emotions
 on case number 24618
 who sits in a corner
 doesn't care if light or darkness
 touches it
 Eyes looking, but not seeing
 Boxed in, nothing can be forced opened
 No grief, anger or happiness
 Stone face, a rock
 that cannot move.

Barb Fullerton



Nursing Home

How I Know Monsters are Real...

by Mike Prater

To begin with, I would like to make one fact known ■ anyone who cares enough to listen: Monsters are real.

Trust me, I should know, I met one.

Now I'm sure that most people who just read that are smiling, or worse, just turning the page. But the reality of monsters is not something that ■ based on popular belief. ■ fact, they like the fact that no one believes they exist. Sheep who are sleeping are easier eating, said the wolf. Oh, yes, did I mention that these creatures are constantly hungry? And no, they don't send out for pizza; unless one of them has a craving for delivery boy.

Ok, you ask, if monsters are real, and they eat people, how do I know so much without having been eaten myself? Well, allow me to tell you, oh doubtful one, and then you will believe.

You see, I am an ordinary student, just like yourselves. I go to school, I work part-time, I live ■ home, and I drive ■ beat up car. I live a normal life, free of mind altering chemical substances or similar forms of influence. My idea of the wierd or the frightening consisted of a pop physics test or killing off a sixpack too soon.

At least, that is, before I met my friend and his companions.

As I mentioned before, I am a student. And since I spent a lot of my time on campus, it is of little surprise that my story takes place on that same locale. In fact, it is probably just as well, since when you hear about the bizarre, it is usually taking place in some third world country to somebody named Paco, who refuses to give his last name. This is a lot closer to home. A little too close, maybe. But I am an artist, according to my declared major, and therefore I managed somehow to become involved with the school publications put upon their volunteers, then you realize that the job involves a lot of late hours spent on campus. These are times when all the classrooms are dark, when the hallways are empty, when the only sound you can hear is the far off droning of the ventilation system as it whispers its quiet reassurance into the passive silence.

One night, not too long ago, I was working those very same late hours. Of course, I wasn't alone. At any given night my journalistic counterparts are in that office, desperately performing the impossible and cranking out every typed word needed to make a paper. So, there we were, all of us doing our assigned tasks, each intent upon his or her efforts, not worrying about the time, which on this particular evening had become quite late.

Another bad thing about being human, as I found out, is the need to relieve ourselves. I mean, monsters count on this flaw in our digestive systems, and take full advantage of the isolated places this

need forces us to go into.

But being unaware of this fact, or even of the presence of any form of threat in the basement hallways of the English building, I set down my pen and looked at my laboring companions.

"I'm gonna take a walk down the hall, does anybody want a coke or something?" I asked. The general response was a no thank you, except for Bob. He dug in his pocket for a moment, then came up with ■ handful of change.

"Yeah, I'll go with you though."

"OK"

So we left the brightly lit room which was alive with the sounds of clicking keyboards, and went into the dim silence of the carpeted corridor. I remember thinking how oppressive the thought of layers of darkened classrooms above me was. It made me feel like we had entered another world of sorts. This feeling was heightened by the rather poor decor, but I'm no interior designer, just a cartoonist.

"It's quiet down here."

"No kiddin'."

Soon our short walk was over. I went into the john, while Bob stepped into the stairwell where the pop machine was kept.

Now, I have always been quick with my business. So I guess I caught him off guard when I came out of there in less than a minute.

When I walked over to the pop machine, I thought at first that Bob had been even quicker than I had been. He was no where in sight. But just as I was about to return to the office, I noticed a can of coke, sitting in the machine's dispenser. It was as if somebody had put in their money, pushed the button, and left.

Now, I had never known Bob to be absent minded, but I figured everybody made mistakes. So I proceeded to retrieve the coke, until I heard the crunching noise.

It was the sound made when a full set of yellow brown teeth crunch up the last three inches of someone's thigh bone.

I turned around to see Bob, or at least something that almost looked like Bob. The hair was as thick as spikey pencils, and the face appeared rather stretched out and bore a particularly disgusting green tinge to it. But the most revealing feature was his eyes. They were a bloody red in color, with narrow slits just like a cat's.

This frightening gaze fixed my own, and at that moment I was more terrified than I think I will ever be again. It was just too real to be any sort of joke, and too unexpected to be comprehended. So I stood there staring at it for the longest time, until I suddenly noticed that the metamorphosis had become complete. I was staring at good ol' Bob again. Well, monster Bob anyway. Then, to my total amazement, I regained control of my senses.



continued from page 12

I cast a quick, desperate look over my shoulder at the far off light of the office down the hall.

"Try and run and I'll tear your skull open, jerk."

Bob's voice jerked my head around. He was smiling a sardonic smile as he combed his hair.

"Really. In fact I may just do that anyway. Brains have a rather unique flavor you know."

"Bob?" I stammered.

Monster Bob looked disgusted for a moment, then yanked the can out of my hand and opened it.

"Maybe I won't eat your brain, it sounds yours have gone bad."

"What are you then?" was my next choked question.

Monster Bob smiled.

"I'm the boogey man."

"The boogey man...?"

"You know," he stated, leaning so close that I could see the pieces of raw meat still between his teeth, "a monster."

He let that piece of information sink in as he drained the entire coke in one long gulp. The can he then smashed flat between his finger and thumb, and tossed into the trash barrel.

"Did you really...?" I choked again.

"Eat your buddy Bob?" it finished, then belched loudly, "You betcha, lil' buckeroo."

"Why?"

"I don't have the money for a candy bar."

I just stared in shock. I felt like I was talking to a mixture of Howdy Doody, Eddie Murphy, and the star actor in *Dawn of the Living Dead*. But for some reason I was remaining calm. Don't ask me how, call it repressed panic.

"Guess what we're gonna do?" he queried in a tone you'd use with a three year old.

"What?"

He reached over and put his arm around me. I looked down at his fingers and saw that the nails had grown long, black and sharp.

"We, my little bread stick, are going to go back to the office now."

"Why?" I asked hesitantly, keeping my eyes upon the claws.

Monster Bob chuckled slightly.

"Well, I'm not the only one who has to eat you know. I've got a fat wife and 10 lil' chilluns to feed."

When he noticed my look of apprehension, he continued while slowly slicing my shirt open with the point of his index finger.

You see, your buddy Bob has a few errands to run. And of course, he won't want to run them with someone different each time. Until."

"Until no one is left but me." I finished.

"I'm saving you for an after dinner mint, buckeroo."

Up til that point I had maintained a fair amount of control over my actions. But as a child I had never liked anyone who used the term "Buckeroo". Something snapped.

"Alright, now just who in the hell do you

think you are?" I yelled. It startled the monster so bad his mouth fell open and he stopped cutting my shirt.

"First you kill my friend, and now you want me to sit in there and let you kill the rest of them." I punctuated the statement by shoving the creature away from me and up against a wall. It let out a hiss and started to come me. But it was too late. I was riled.

"You know what I think?" I yelled again, slamming him back against the wall. "I think you've lost it, Mr. Boogey Man! You want me to help you feed your family? Well you can just kiss my..."

That was all I got out before he closed those black claws around my throat and squeezed.

You know how you'll read in the gossip pages, "Man gets throat crushed by stampeding Elephant", and you wonder what it felt like? Well, I now know. It feels exactly like when a monster squeezes your throat shut, then lifts you by that monster squeezes you throat shut, then lifts you by that same portion of your anatomy and shakes you a couple of times before tossing you against a wall.

Needless to say, it took a lot of the fight out of me. So much, that all I could do was sit there and wheeze like I had the worst case of asthma you've ever seen. I numbly felt the creature lift me to my feet by the front of my shirt.

"You were saying?" It asked pleasantly.

At that point, I decided that another hateful outburst would probably leave me sticking halfway out of the coke dispenser. And my mamma didn't raise no soft drink.

"Nothing," I coughed.

"Fine," it smiled, "shall we go now?"

I nodded vaguely, and we began to walk down the hall towards the office.

Now don't get me wrong, I didn't plan on helping him at all. I was just hoping that a great idea would hit me in route to our destination.

And for once, my mind did what it was supposed to. A nasty little plan formed itself, and I prepared myself to put it into action.

Nobody even looked up as we entered the office, in fact, no one had probably even noticed we left. Everything was as it had been before I had left. Except that a monster had been added to the paper's staff.

Monster Bob sat down at his console and began to type away with enthusiastic zeal while eyeing my compatriots hungrily. I sat back down at my desk and pretended to rummage through a drawer, looking for an eraser. Instead I found what I needed and quickly stuffed it into my pocket.

I took a deep breath, crossed my fingers for luck and put my plan into action.

"Julie," I called to one of the editors. Julie looked up from her keyboard perturbedly. "Didn't you have a some paper towels in the darkroom? I just spilled some ink."

She nodded her head and motioned towards the little closet like room.

"Where are they?" I asked, getting up.

"I'll show you." She replied and we began to enter the doorway marked "Knock First." By that time Bob had checked my desk for spill-

ed ink, found none, and quickly crossed the room to stand between me and the door.

"I know where they are, and I'll show him." He stated smiling, never taking his eyes off of mine. As Julie returned to her story he made a flourishing gesture towards the door.

"After you."

I had no choice then, so I turned the door knob, only to find it stuck.

"It's stuck. Hold on." I shook it as hard as I could, but it still wouldn't budge.

"Hey, Jim? Is that little tube of grease around here anywhere? It's stuck again." I asked, but before Jim could answer, I remembered it was in my pocket.

"Never mind, I have it." And so I knelt down and squeezed a few drops into the lock and bolt. One quick pull and the door opened.

I motioned inside, and Monster Bob casually stepped up beside me.

"Jerk." I whispered. His eyes went wide as I shoved him once again, only this time inside, and slammed the door. I held the door shut for a moment and the wide-eyed faces of my friends made it clear they considered my actions to be fairly strange.

I tossed the tube of superglue onto a desk as Monster Bob began rant and rave, breaking the context of his obscenities with an occasional blow to the door. I returned to my desk and sat there for a while, ignoring the questions that were flying at me. Then Monster Bob went very quiet.

A few of the staff decided Bob must have hurt himself, and forced the door open. Inside they found only a few scraps of clothing, a large hole in the ceiling, and a very bad smell.

Well, to make the boring parts short, "Bob," was never seen again. There was a big ludo, Police and all. And they even searched the cracks and crevices between the walls of the building, but no results.

What they did find was a large pile of bones inside a boiler that hadn't been used in about twelve years. They marked this off as where several skeletons stolen from the biology department had disappeared to and closed the case.

I haven't seen the creature again, since. But I have also been avoiding dark, lonely hallways on campus, and I've been doing all my late hours work without bathroom breaks. Let me tell you, that is a trick.

Why didn't I ever tell anybody? Why am I writing this down?

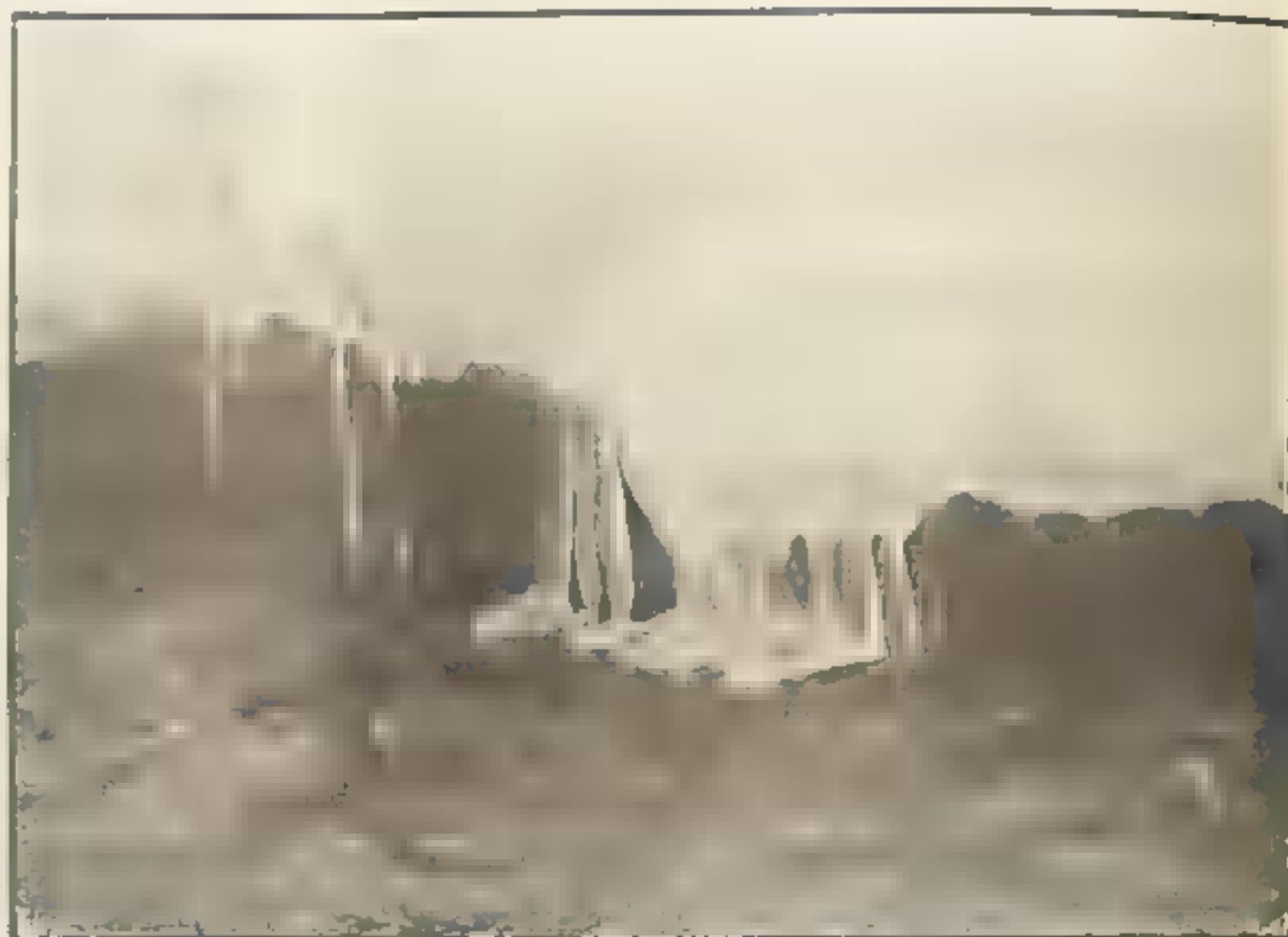
Well, if I told you that I saw a monster when I went to get a coke, you'd probably just smile and say "Sure." And the only reason I'm writing this down is because this way, those who want to believe it can see the truth. Those who don't will just see this as a rather cheap fiction story and go on without thinking twice about it.

Besides, I wouldn't want too many people to believe this. I mean, the monster ate Bob and all, but, he wasn't too bad a guy. Kind of ambitious with his eating habits, but hey, nobody's perfect.

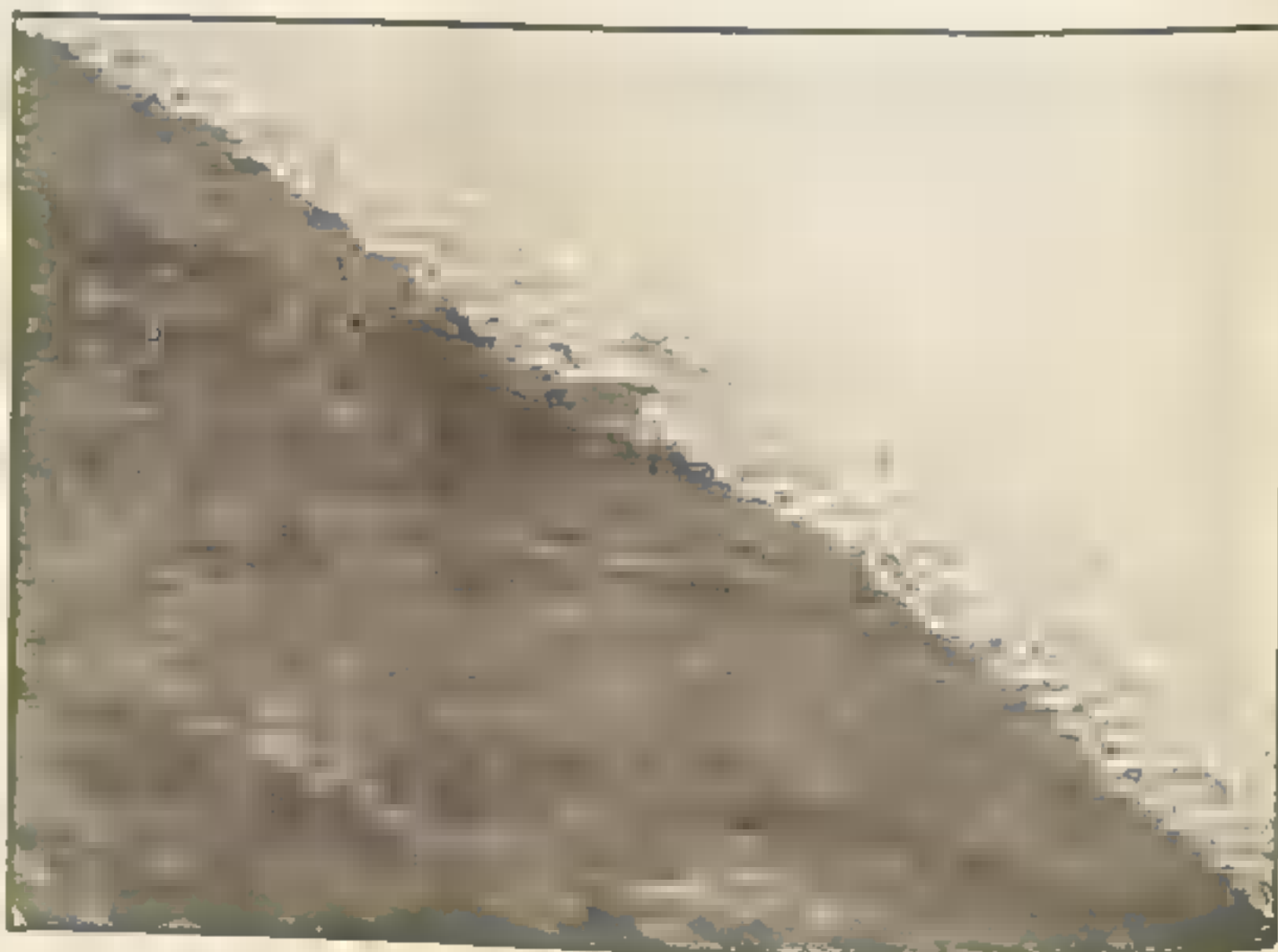
Right?

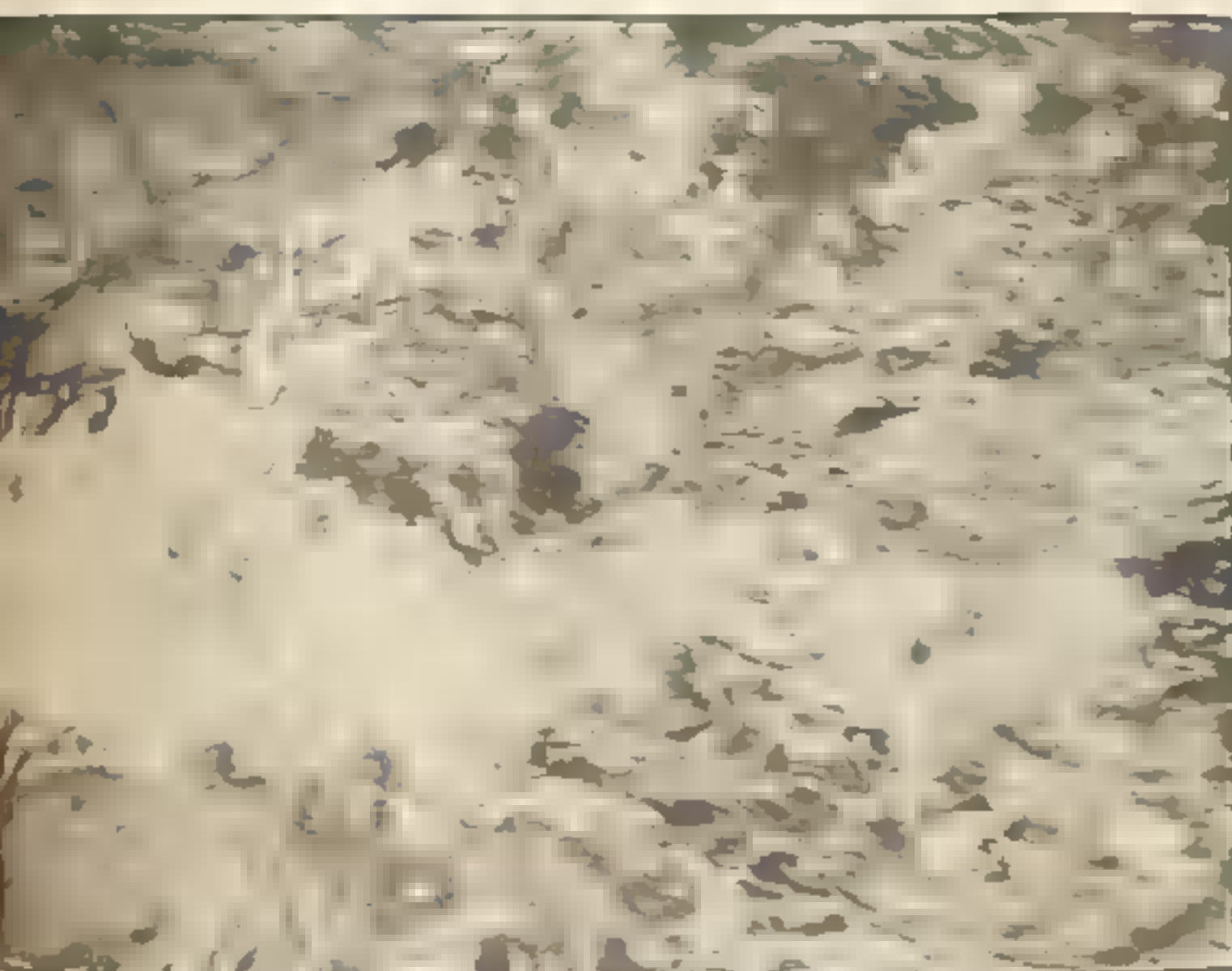
"Right, Lil' Buckeroo."

Don't call me that.



Photography by
JoAnn Hollis





Imagine

Imagine

Nothing. A mass of void, silence
No color, no light, no sound
A world without form, without everything
Without imagination

Imagine

Separation, isolation one from another
Distinctness, set aside, cut off
A world apart from itself
Without communion

Imagine

Partial darkness, absence of true light
Images faint, nondescript, gray
A world of images, dark pictures
Without vividness

Imagine

Sudden sunlight, a golden glow of light
Warmth, energy
A world of possibility, awakened
Without inhibition

Imagine

Greenery, plants bursting forth
Life, color, potential
A world of shapes, forms, and hues
Without destruction

Imagine

Animals peering forth from the plants
Perfection, movement, audibility
A world awakening to sound, life
Without destruction

Imagine

Man, suddenly existing, formed of earth
Creative, intelligent, created
A new world of possibility, exuberance, fulfillment
Without fault

Imagine

War, in a flash of blind fury
Wasteful, destructive, uninhibited
A world of hopeless, helpless desolation
Without feeling

Imagine

Nothing, a mass of void, silence
No color, no light, no sound
A world without everything
Empty.

Poetry by
Jeania Young

Sunset

Sunset

Golden glow at day's close
Pale colors decorate a darkening sky
Warm rays engulf the horizon
Like a smile of satisfaction
from Mother Nature,
The earth is still and blessed

Sunset

Quiet settles slowly
Shadows lengthen and fade to blackness.
Emotions flow like a laughing brook.
Love, peace, complete solitude,
total happiness
Make you glad you're alive.

Sunset

Beauty radiates from the lazy glow.
A hint of mist rises from the dark.
The hues blend perfectly
As though painstakingly hand painted
By some grand Master Designer.

Sunset

Peace and quiet envelope you.
The glow dims and the colors fade away.
Warmth and brilliance cool
to stern sovereignty.
The moon and stars, rulers of the
evening rises,
As night slowly closes in.

Recollections of Childhood

Long summer days and hot sultry nights,
Children playing in the sun--
Make one reflect, recall, recollect
Simpler days--yesterdays...

Stories at bedtime, barefoot in the park,
Puppy dogs, jump ropes, playgrounds--
Times which were simple, easy,
Unhurried, unrushed, happy, and fun.

Butterflies, pretty flowers, the wind in
your hair...

Blowing bubbles, big balloons, bouncy balls..
All bring back memories of bygone days..
Days past--but never forgotten.

Being accused of your own murder
is no way to impress a lady...



THE BAD DATE

by Mark Corrington

(All persons' names, except for mine have been changed to (a) protect the innocent, (b) avoid lawsuits, and (c) prevent knuckled objects from flattening my nose cartilage.)

I suffer from a horrid affliction which has warped my sex life forever. 'Tis neither a physical or a mental ailment but one more akin to a psychic disease. A curse, if you will. It has been called many things (some colorfully pornographic) but I refer to it as "first-dalitis." Simply put, anyone stricken with this malady will have only horrendous first dates. Since this problem only affects the one asking for a date, until recently it was a male-only syndrome but, with the advent of women's lib, more and more women are coming under its dark cloud. This affliction has some variables that, when multiplied together, will dramatically increase the disaster quotient. They are: how much you emotionally care for your date TIMES how much you want to impress her/him TIMES how prestigious a function you are going to attend. If you're going to pick up some cheap tootsie/stud at a bar for a McD.L.T. and some embarrassingly perverted but totally satisfying sex, you'll probably only lose your comb. On the other hand, if you're taking the gorgeous woman you've loved from afar to your college prom dance, you can (like I was) be charged as an accessory after the fact in your own murder.

That last statement needs some clarifying...

Unlike most college campuses, Missouri Southern State College is almost brand new. Originally it was a two-year junior college but, in 1967, it moved to its new location and freshly constructed buildings and became a four-year institute. Designed for modern educating, the classrooms are well lit, centrally heated and air-conditioned. All labs, be they

science or language, have the latest equipment. When the new fine arts building became crammed, a wing was added. Something's always under construction, giving the students the feeling the campus is growing with them. Clean, spacious, and casual. On the down-side, however, all this newness leads to a definite lack of tradition. There are no fraternities or sororities nor any nearby rambling old dwellings to house them. Just empty fields. Someone once had the inspiration of buying some used mobile homes and interconnecting them to form a modular frat house but the idea was nixed. Who wants to reside in a house another motley gang could tip over? A thought I had, Toga Day, was also soundly rejected. The administration didn't care if the faculty and pupils wore duckie-imprinted bedsheets or poison-ivy in their hair; even F.D.R. had a toga party in the White House. The objections came from the business students (who were afraid that such a liberal/reactionary/anarchic event would blotch their future careers forever), and the jocks (who realized, to their dismay, it would force them to wash their bed linens more than once a semester). This dearth of social activity magnified the importance of the few we did have. The senior prom thusly assumed the stature of a coronation. Art students vainly searched for clothing not speckled with paint. Jocks were forced to buy socks. Business majors wore their sportiest dark suits with vests and, if they were daring, a necktie with a pattern. Being an ex-business student who wised up and changed my major to art, I already owned a black suit and, thanks to a mishap with an artist's palette, an exceedingly colorful tie. All I needed was a date, some beautiful slow-witted girl who hadn't heard about my earlier traumatic first encounters. And then fate dropped Marilyn into my lap!

Marilyn! Sensuous yet sleek Marilyn. Like her namesakes, she had the hair, eyes and moves of Monroe and the figure and face of Chambers. Ever since my gonads awoke dur-

ing puberty, I had this mental image of my perfect woman, from the way she spoke to the dark fleck in the iris of her right gray-green eye. The first time I was introduced to Marilyn, I was agog. It was her! It was as if I had been in love with her not only for all of my life but for innumerable incarnations before, always wanting but never winning her affections. Naturally, she considered me a pencil-necked geek. My worship of her blinded me to her faults as I mentally placed her on a pedestal of virginal purity and goodness. The fact that she hung out with guys named Bruiser and The Skull (who had some remarkable tattoos of human dismemberment) did not deter me. Three weeks before prom night, I summoned all my courage and with the boldness of the Cowardly Lion begging the Wizard of Oz for a heart, I asked her. Marilyn said yes! Since her last boyfriend had been extradited that morning, she had no date for the big event! I rushed right out and ordered the best orchid money could buy because it was going to be a night to remember...like when Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over the lantern and started the great Chicago fire.

One week and counting before the ultimate date of my life and I was merrily pattering away in sculpture class. I was creating a wooden bust of one of my idols, W.C. Fields. Not only was it a remarkable resemblance but if you tipped the hat back, you'd discover a bottle of hooch and four shot glasses inside: a true tribute to that immortal imbibor. Mr. F., my beleaguered instructor, however, had grave doubts as to whether a miniature bust could be considered fine art but, with the passing years, the work has proven itself. Art is to be appreciated and enjoyed and the way my friends gravitate to the bust, I'm sure it is. Anyway, on that day I needed to bore some holes in the hat brim so, since the small power drill was occupied, I decided to use the new drill press. There it stood, as tall as I, still gleaming from its final polishing at the factory. It could cut gently through the softest wood with a minimum of splintering or punch a hole through tempered steel. If a Machine could be considered a work of art, it was the Michelangelo of hole makers. Unfortunately, its instruction manual was as cumbersome as an art history textbook and as badly worded. After a few minutes of unsuccessfully trying to decipher that gibberish, I junked the manual and monkeyed with its belts and controls until it looked O.K. to me. (Of course my mechanical expertise left a lot to be desired. The first time I helped my father change spark plugs in his car, I removed the radiator cap and dropped one in. I was sixteen at the time.) Now all I needed was a drill bit but which one? There were dozens of bits in the cabinet. Deciding to go with one I had worked with before, I grabbed a big sucker

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that I had previously used with an old-fashioned hand brace. Seating it in the chuck was no problem at all, especially after I tapped on it with a rubber mallet twenty or thirty times. Slapping the piece of wood in place, I flicked on the switch.

Many of the next events occurred within split seconds of each other. Drill presses sound like high speed precision motors, not car crushers smashing an eighteen wheeler filled with angry gorillas. Red hot sparks shot out its every seam as the entire machine rocked like Godzilla looking for a town to stomp. That's when my left hand went into the whirling bit. Pain! Pulling my hand out of the behemoth, I grabbed my left wrist with my right hand and let out a scream that was more from anger than injury. Then I saw my wounded paw. Blood completely covered that hand. Suddenly, there was no pain, no anger, no reality. My brain kicked into a giddy mode, not unlike how I've felt after my third pitcher of beer. "Oh, Mr. F. I have a little problem over here. Do you have a minute?" The instructor was already speeding my way, hurdling the tables with the grace of a buffalo shot from a cannon. The screeching press continued to whirl, shooting bullets of red everywhere. (As a later result, all exposed wood projects were stained reddish-brown or darker.) Mr. F wanted me to sit down and put my head between my legs (not a pretty view) as a fellow student dashed for the first aid kit. I didn't want to sit down. I was so gassed that I wanted to show everyone what I had done as my project for the day. One guy, a fan of all those teenage slasher movies, wanted to get his camera for some nice juicy close-ups. By this time I had enough brown paper towels around my mitt that it looked like I was wearing a boxing glove. The student with the first aid kit careened through the door, caught his foot on a chair and did a double gainer into the concrete floor. All the gauze flew out, unraveling in flight, and landed in a pile of sawdust. Somebody removed the towels and wrapped me with it anyway, transforming my hand into a vanilla ice cream cone covered with nuts. I was having a marvelous time, feeling like a guest star on an episode of HERE'S LUCY. With visions of lawsuits dancing in his head, Mr. F decided I needed to go to the hospital. I offered to drive but, with Mr. F under one arm and Captain Clumsy the Gauze Man under the other, they dragged me upstairs to the parking lot as I blew kisses to my remaining classmates.

Mr. Toad's wild ride in *The Wind and the Willows* had nothing on this trip. Mrs. F had recently given birth and the entire back end of their VW van had been converted into toddler land. I was unceremoniously tossed into the playpen with the squeaky toys as my two helpmates piled into the front. The van went from zero to warp speed in one second as it peeled out of the parking lot on two wheels.

Mr. F then taught me one doesn't need brakes at crowded intersections, just a loud horn and two madmen screaming out the windows. I wanted to view this travelling spectacle but the G-forces were crushing me into the dirty diapers. Mr. F then slammed on his brakes,

As my quadruple vision simmered down into mere double, I heard the Liberty Bell sympathizing with my skull. Again the G-forces were upon me...

propelling me out of the baby penitentiary and slammed me into the backs of their seats. We had arrived at the old Freeman Hospital. The place was a mess because they were moving to their new quarters. Boxes and trash was everywhere; it reminded me of my place. Again they hauled me around like a side of beef, this time past a protesting nurse and into an emergency room. With the old "One, two, three, HEAVE!", they flipped me upon the examining table. A body in motion stays in motion for I hit the table, rolled and plunged off the other side. No wonder they had built another hospital. Not only was the linoleum discolored and cracked but it tasted awful too. Again I was flopped on the table just as the nurse came in with some forms I had to fill out. I scrawled a giant MAR before I ran off the sheet and took a peek down the front of her uniform. Mr. F demanded to see a doctor. Unfortunately, all the physicians were either at the new clinic or out playing golf; there wasn't a sawbones in the place. The R.N. referred us to an available doctor whose office was eighteen blocks away, a scant seven second trip for my rocket commander. Again I was toted to the jet-powered van but not before my two helpmates walked me into a steel pole. As my quadruple vision simmered down into mere double, I heard the Liberty Bell sympathizing with my skull. Again the G-forces were upon me but this time I could peek out the window. Now I knew how Mr. F got around so fast. Roads, hell! He drove straight to his destination, dodging only immovable objects larger than the van. People and pets fled in panic as he cut diagonal tracks across their lawns. After literally driving through a housing construction site (the building's wooden frame wasn't that sturdy anyway), we crash landed in the complex's parking lot. Again I was bounced up more stairs and we three stooges burst into the office. Thanks to the nurse's telephone call, the doc was waiting for us. He removed the avant-

garde-gauze and examined me. The first two fingers and thumb were badly slashed but, since there were no broken bones, they were savable without surgery. The thumbnail was hanging by a thread and when the doctor pulled it off, it sounded like a violin string snapping. I asked if I would be able to play my guitar after my fingers healed and the doctor smiled yes. "Good," I replied. "I could NEVER play that thing!" Mr. F just rolled his eyes, muttered something about sanatorium commitment papers and wandered out of the room.

(For the next three months I had to wear a rubber glove in all my classes. For that period of time I was nicknamed The Proctologist. One other note: when my hand hit the drill, the tempered steel bent 45 degrees. To this day, neither Mr. F nor I have an explanation as to why the bit gave and my bones didn't.)

It's prom night and my mother is helping me dress myself. Do you know how embarrassing that is? Not only were my three fingers excessively bandaged with splints to prevent their bending but I had a tampon wrapped around my thumb to absorb any seepage. I also had a spare tampon in my pocket. Yea, looking like a mummy wasn't bad enough but having to go to the men's room to change my tampon? I'd NEVER live that one down! So, with the orchid in its plastic box in one hand and my keys in my mouth, I was on my way.

Marilyn's father, step-mother and three step-brothers had gone out for the evening so Marilyn and I could have some time to ourselves. (The men in her family liked me, partly because I didn't have a rap sheet.) There were a few lights on when I parked my VW Bug in front of the house. My big moment! I was so nervous that my left leg began to shake with a life of its own. Fumbling with the orchid and keys, I was too flustered to notice that I bumped my left hand as I got out of the Bug. I rang the bell and Marilyn answered the door. Good God, she was beautiful! Her flowing evening dress was a sunny yellow with a golden bodice that, except for the tiniest of shoulder straps, left her shoulders and the tops of her breasts bare. She said, "Hello, Mark," to which I replied, "Who?" After inviting me inside and going into the kitchen where the light was better, she asked me to pin the orchid over her left breast. With my sweaty palms and quaky hands, I couldn't even get the damn thing out of the box. After a few tries, I gave up. There was no way I could attach a flower to her with a straight pin without skewering her. Sighing, she took the corsage and went to the bathroom to pin it on herself. I stood there alone in that kitchen, listening to the tap slowly drip. Only when I glanced at the sink, I saw the tap was dry. My furrowed brow suddenly shot to the top of my forehead when I looked down and saw blood

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dripping out of my middle finger! Images of Marilyn seeing the blood and then fainting panicked my mind. Grabbing a tea towel, I tried to mop up the mess but all I did was spread it. It then dawned on me that one shouldn't try to wipe up blood with the hand that's bleeding. Not seeing a roll of paper towels anywhere, I tossed the tea towel in the trash and tried to finish the job with a damp dish towel. Water only makes a little blood look like a lot of blood. Marilyn called down from the landing to see if everything was all right. I lied through my teeth and said it was. Rinsing out the dish towel was also a bad idea. It takes two good hands to wring out a piece of cloth, otherwise you get stuff all over the kitchen and counter and cabinets. When Marilyn came down the stairs, I attempted to prevent her from entering her own kitchen. For some strange reason this made her suspicious. Pushing her way past me, she examined the blood mess and just shook her head. With three jock step-brothers in the house, she was always tending to their open wounds and had become jaded about it. (Maybe that's why she was studying nursing.) Taking a long sharp knife, she slipped it up under the bandage and cut it off in one clean stroke. After noting blasely that she could see the bone, Marilyn professionally rebandaged that digit. Another five minutes was spent sponge mopping the floor and, leaving the rest for later, we proceeded to the dance.

The dance was incredibly uneventful and predictable. Ill-fitted rented tuxedos, toilet paper streamers, music blaring from speakers with torn woofers, faculty-approved punch and flasks of the good stuff in every other pocket or purse. Marilyn insisted that I keep my left hand above my head the entire time, which made me look like I was asking permission to go to the bathroom. I dance like a hemorrhoidal duck to begin with; to subject Marilyn to my exposed armpit during the slow, close, romantic melodies ruined both the mood and her mascara. During the course of the evening, my extended arm was even mistaken for a hat rack. Meanwhile at Marilyn's home, her father and step-mother were conclusion-jumping. A bloody kitchen, an equally-bloody knife in the sink, even tainted mop water. There was only one answer: Marilyn's date had tried to rape her and she stabbed him (me) in self-defense. Immediately they called the family lawyer who surveyed the situation and decided, thanks to his great medical background, that if the attacker had lost that much blood, he was either critically injured or dead, most likely the latter. After killing me, Marilyn then called one of her other sleazy boy friends (me in a dual role) to help dispose of my body. That made the kitchen a crime scene, so the police were called.

The dance was over but the evening was still young, especially if Marilyn's parents were not home. Although I had enough cotton in my mouth to make a million Q-Tips, lust was finally getting the better of me. Two or three hours of kissing, petting, and fondling would make me forget how lousily the date started. I had just driven around the corner when we spotted a variety of vehicles (including three police cars and the coroner's wagon) parked in front of Marilyn's house. My date went wild. The three step-brothers had finished being questioned and were going upstairs when Marilyn and I crashed in. A series of cocked guns froze us in our tracks. The family lawyer drew Marilyn aside, instructing her to throw herself upon the mercy of the court. Meanwhile, a sneering detective slammed me into a wall and frisked me for weapons. All he found was my wallet, keys, comb, flask, and tampon. The three brothers sat on the landing to view the floor show as the detective grilled me. "What's your name and where is the victim?"

My date went wild...A series of cocked guns froze us in our tracks. The family lawyer drew Marilyn aside, instructing her to throw herself upon the mercy of the court.

I asked, "Who?"
 "Mark Corrington."
 "Yes?" I acknowledged my name.
 "Yes, what? Did you know the victim?" he barked.
 "What victim?"
 "A wise guy, huh? What's your name and where's the victim?"
 "What victim?"
 "MARK CORRINGTON!" the veins popped out of his neck.
 "Yes?" I again responded. This take-off of Abbott & Costello lasted a good ten minutes. The so-called detective got madder and redder and I became more lost and confused as the minutes ticked on. I looked around for help from any quarter. I had no idea where Marilyn's parents were and Marilyn was being restrained from speaking by the attorney. Her brothers were watching the fiasco unfold from the landing and said nothing because they were too busy suppressing their laughter. Finally, in a fit of rage, the detective savagely slammed me against a wall again, called me something lower than pond scum, charged me

with being an accessory after the fact in a possible murder and began to read me my rights while cuffing my right hand. He started to cuff my left when he finally spotted the bandages. The brothers couldn't take it anymore and started to loudly crack up. One hysterical sibling yelled down, "Hey, Mark! You viciously murdered yourself and now you're going to jail!"

As the police became quiet with the realization of their blunder, something inside me snapped. Though I've always been loquacious, I had always respected authority. Not once did I get spanked in school, not once did I play hooky. I trembled before principals and police officers and shied away from fistfights. Until then. Injured hand or not, I grabbed the idiotic investigator by the lapels and slammed HIM into the wall! I then threw a couple of punches before two men in blue pulled me off. With my three fans cheering me on from the landing, I cursed Det. Duncie and all the farm animals he was related to, screaming about lawsuits that his great-grandchildren would be paying until they died of old age. Marilyn, to her credit, yanked off her corsage and shoved the straight pin into the lame-brained lawyer's private parts. She then disgustedly marched to her bedroom amid her brothers' catcalls and the attorney's high-pitched whimpering. I, meanwhile, was forceably shanghaied to my bug while bellowing oaths the likes which have not been heard since the Inquisition. One officer suggested I forget the whole thing. The last thing I wanted to do was cause trouble for myself and my family. Besides, the police have a way of barbecuing their own.

Of course, this incident shot my good-night kiss to hell.

I never told my parents about the outcome of that date but they knew. Two days later my father stated, "You'll never get married at this rate," and then said no more. I grew a beard and semi-joined the counterculture movement. It took fifteen years to get Marilyn out of my system. The last unsubstantiated rumor I heard stated she had been through two husbands and had three children. She also now weighed more than me, which meant she was a real chunk.

Why am I writing this all down now? Last January, a married lady friend of mine from Tulsa gave me the dating chance of a lifetime. A ravishing actress from a television series who was tired of the Hollywood crowd, needed an escort for a formal dinner party at the governor's mansion in O.K. City. The actress had admired three of my paintings in my friend's office and my chum, the itinerant machemaker, had wheedled the thespian's private telephone number. All I had to do was call her up and ask her out. I tore up the number. With my track record, I don't want it on my conscience that I started the Armageddon.